

To: George H. Robinson
Executive Secretary

From: Roy E. Morris
Industrial Relations Secretary

Industrial Relations Department

Report for November 1945

The outstanding success during the month was the result of the conference your Secretary arranged with the State War Manpower Commission Director, Mr. Frank Costello, in Trenton, and the Executive Secretaries of the other Urban Leagues and similar agencies in New Jersey. This Trenton conference was a part of the program initiated by your Secretary to coordinate the work of such agencies as ours in the State of New Jersey. Several meetings showed, among other things, the need for the following to be cleared with the State U.S.E.S. Director:

1. A complete picture of types and volume of job openings in the several industrial areas of the state. This would enable the League to advise on movement of workers for best opportunities, as well as provide a check on what is happening to Negroes in parts of the state in which our agencies are not located.
2. A change in the U.S.E.S. practice of classifying applicants (certainly Negro applicants) on the basis of their pre-war work experience. We feel that applicants should be classified according to their highest skill and experience, plus their main interest.
3. A regular (mandatory) report from all U.S.E.S. offices in our areas, of employers who request "white only" and/or refuse to hire Negroes.
4. Improvement of U.S.E.S. interviewers' handling of Negro job-seekers, to eliminate occurrences of qualified Negroes applying for "better" jobs, being interviewed only for less desirable jobs.

The conference in Trenton did not bring all we wished. Mr. Costello could not see his way clear, or that it would be "best" to issue a written directive requiring reporting of employers who discriminate against minority groups. This is a drawback, that the order is not written. However, we conceded the position of the U.S.E.S. at present, that others who are adamant and refuse to accept Negroes might develop their own recruiting system and cease placing orders with the U.S.E.S. This would decrease our chances of building any specific information appropriate for action. We, therefore, accepted Mr. Costello's verbal approval of our plan, and his promise to give verbal approval to the Area Directors.

Mr. Costello suggested that he instruct the Area Director in Newark to invite Mr. Morris to address the next U.S.E.S. Manager's meeting, at which time Mr. Morris would state his plan and request action with the approval of the Area Director and State Director.

As this report is being written in December, the invitation and address have been made (on December 7th). There looms a battle between the Newark U.S.E.S. Manager, his superior officers, and the Urban League. The Newark Manager stated that he would "under no circumstances" make up any report for the Urban League; and that he challenges any Division Against Discrimination or anyone else to force him to do so. Further discussion by Mr. Morris of his request and intent, resulted in the Area Director's ordering all the Managers to comply, the Newark Manager included. We suspect that the Newark Manager will not "take" this "lying down", since he has a previous directive to base his own feeling on. The previous directive forbids any U.S.E.S. information to be released to any other agency unless by releases (through channels) of general information, specifically approved.

Mr. Morris' position is that the U.S.E.S. is ordered to issue 5-10's against discriminating employers, but does not do so. If its reasons are that it is not equipped to handle proper action, the Urban League wishes to aid the U.S.E.S. in fulfilling its own duties.

Ground is being broken for a Conference on Household Employee Standards by your Industrial Relations Secretary. Because of an opportunity presented to utilize the excellent volunteer services of an outstanding civic worker, who was interested in doing something to keep domestic workers' wages from dropping to pre-war levels, your Secretary has helped this volunteer include the broad area of household work, and become interested in "carrying the ball" to the ultimate success of a set of Standards as to wages, hours, and working conditions, sponsored by the community-at-large, and accepted by all employers of household workers. Mrs. Ames, Red Cross Worker and resident of Nutley, has accepted from your Secretary, his own suggestions as to Standards and gearing these with her own, has presented them to several Women's Club groups. Mr. Morris has included some discussions of the program in several public addresses. Outstanding is the action taken as a result of your Secretary's addressing the Essex County Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress. A letter to us shows a good resolution adopted (at a later meeting), "in accordance with (Mr. Morris's) request, this resolution may be found attached. It provides a good basis for mobilizing public opinion on fair standards.

The Employment Problems Committee has referred three cases to the Division Against Discrimination. No official note is made as to the cooperation of the E.P.C. in the Division's receipt of the complaints. Our interest is that discrimination is actually reported to the proper place, and that appropriate action is taken completely down the line. As long as some really interested and equipped persons accept responsibility for E.P.C., it should be a distinct addition to community forces for good.

The next step of importance in the Industrialists' Program was a conference with Mr. Charles Edison, President of Thomas A. Edison, Inc., and former Governor of the state. The Industrial Relations Secretary kept in mind the fact that Mr. Edison is quite influential with Industrialist and politically. From these two points of view, discussion was divided on the level of genuine acceptance of Negro workers in the higher levels of industry, with leading forces in the state in complete accord and active in helping to show the way. This discussion was clinched with the presentation of a request that Thomas A. Edison, Inc., employ a Negro personnel officer, whose application I placed in Mr. Edison's hands. Groundwork seems to have been laid quite well, and Mr. Edison is active considering the step - in "the face of unsettled conditions."

From time to time your Secretary has been called on to help plan the activities program of the Industrial departments of the Main Branch and Jones Street Branch of the Newark I.W.O.A. In November your Secretary gave information and helped map out a program for those departments, based on that information, that will take I.W.O.A. staff into certain industrial plants in the area. The facilities and recreational programs of the I.W.O.A. will be offered to female workers.

Two social work conferences were attended during November - one the full three days, the other off an on, between the N. J. Urban League office and the Essex House Hotel where the N. J. Welfare Conference was held. Your Secretary addressed the National Urban League Conference (held in New York City) on its opening day. For the N.J. Welfare Conference he shared responsibility with some ten others for the whole Conference Program, and with three others for a general Luncheon Meeting - for which he secured two of the speakers. In both of these areas of activity the N. J. Urban League made contributions through its Industrial Relations Secretary and the Secretary received facts and stimulation.

As a member of the Executive Board of the New Jersey Consumers League your Industrial Relations Secretary is concerned with the Amendments to Fair Labor Standards Act, now up for passage in Washington. The N. J. Urban League's story is being represented through its Secretary in the Consumers League representative at the Hearing in Washington on December 10th - (called by Secretary of Labor, Swallenbach). Similarly the N. J. Urban League's objective are being represented through its Industrial Relations Secretary's work on the Wage and Hour Committee of the Consumers League. The committee is to present its findings and views to State Commissioner of Labor, Harper, in Trenton shortly. We are particularly interested in elimination of zoning in the Wages & Hours Law of New Jersey, and the increase of Minimum Wages, in the Laundry industry. The present minimum for the highest zone is 33¢ an hour, for the lowest zone 25¢ an hour!

Five public addresses were given, in New York City, Newark and Summit.

Other work performed by the Secretary, kept apace, but in volume decreased slightly because of the two Conferences and a larger number of special interviews and conferences with persons outside the Urban League office. It is a comment on the effectiveness of the Department's efforts, but lack of personnel to keep the routine office demands satisfied.